

CHAPTER TEN  
POST-COLONIAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION OR  
COLONIALITY OF LANGUAGE BY STEALTH?  
FINEX NDHLOVU

**1.Introduction**

Regardless of domain- whether education/educational linguistics, media, business and law, and so on-language policy always necessarily implicates several issues that are economic, political, cultural and developmental. For this reason, we need to approach the discourse and praxis of language policy in a manner that recognises and integrates all these separate, but intricately connected, disciplinary perspectives. In another sense, we need to draw on a much wider battery of critical,reflective and more progressive views on languages and language policies that not only question but also proffer viable alternatives to canonical models of language policy and planning regimes. This chapter seeks to add new theorisation to conversations on post-colonial African language policies, which is one of the themes of this edited volume. It brings to light those intricate linkages between language policy-making,the interests of politics,and exigencies of fashioning linguistic and cultural uniformity in the midst of diversity. The argument is that while language policies are generally designed with good intentions, they also have a darker side. They often result in unintended consequences, such as the social, economic and political exclusion or marginalisation of speakers of language varieties that do not fit within the straightjacket of normative language policy regimes. As James W. Tollefson(1991) observed, planning language is, ipso facto, planning inequality.

The language policy enterprise in post-colonial Africa, and in many other parts of the world that historically were colonial outposts, still proceeds from homogenising standard language ideological frameworks (Ndhlovu 2015b). Most,if not all, such standard languages currently considered as mother tongues or home languages of students in educational settings are, in fact, colonial impositions that were and continue to be embraced by post-colonial African regimes. I call this ‘coloniality of language by stealth’, a concept I use as a summary term for describing the ways that colonially invented versions of languages continue to be used as a technology of political control,manipulation and subtle cultural normalisation. This view on language has its roots in colonial modernity, where colonial administrators, aided by early Christian missionaries, embarked on projects of inventing particular identities for native populations that were subsequently conflated with standard African national languages (Ranger 1985;Makoni 1998;Brutt-Griffler 2006;Chimhundu 1992; Ndhlovu 2006). The process is still ongoing throughout post-colonial

Africa, largely being perpetuated through medium of instruction and language education policies that are built around colonially-invented languages.

In discussing contending issues emanating from this legacy of colonial ways of seeing language, the focus is on the dark side of language policy in African contexts. The relation between the Global North and the Global South is problematized by drawing on the idea of coloniality of language. The overall intention is to deploy the analytical framework of decoloniality in fresh and arresting ways that might help us see what we couldn't - or wouldn't-see before in the domain of language education policy.

The chapter brings a critical discussion on post-colonial African language policies, by questioning how contemporary celebratory discourses of diversity-multilingualism, multilingual education, multilingual language policy, additive bilingual education and so on - still reverberate colonial ideologies. Examples are from South Africa and Zimbabwe, with some passing remarks on other comparable countries from the Global South. In line with Ndhlovu and Kamusella(2018), I conclude by suggesting a broadening of the horizon of our conceptualisation of language policies by integrating Southern and decolonial perspectives that draw attention to real language practices of real people in real life. The goal is to push the envelope beyond the 'norm' of named languages as invented, imposed and controlled by colonialists, and now continued by post-colonial regimes.

## **2. On coloniality of language**

The concept of 'coloniality' originates from the decolonial school of thought. This is a social-theoretical framework pioneered by Latin American and other like-minded thinkers from the Global South, including Walter D. Mignolo (2000, 2002, 2011); Anibal Quijano (1998, 2000); Ramon Grosfoguel (2005, 2006); and Enrique Dussel (1995), among others. It questions the monopoly and universalising tendencies of epistemologies from the Global North and calls for the recognition and mainstreaming of other knowledges and ways of engaging with knowledges. Decolonial theorists, therefore, criticise both the intellectual distortions of Western modernity and the concrete oppression brought by 500 years of colonial domination. Banazak and Ceja (2010: 115) explain the concept of 'coloniality' (which must be clearly distinguished from that of 'colonialism') in the following terms:

When they use the term 'colonialism' decolonial thinkers are referring to a form of political domination with corresponding institutions; [and] when they use the term 'coloniality' they are referring to something more

important for them, a pattern of comprehensive and deep-reaching power spread throughout the world. In other words, colonialism has been one of the historical experiences constitutive of coloniality; but coloniality is not exhausted in colonialism, as it includes many other experiences and manifestations, which still operate in the present.

The important point here is this: even when the formal process of colonisation has come to an end, there still remains a form of power (coloniality) which produces, uses and legitimises differences between societies and forms of knowledge. An additional pertinent point is that although decolonial theory is more broadly associated with scholars from post-colonial societies, the focus of coloniality is in many ways different from that of post-colonial studies. While post-colonial studies have always sought to problematise colonialism as a historical event, coloniality takes a much broader focus that problematises colonial power as a continuum that transcends the colonial era and whose presence continues to influence and affect current social realities, including discourses on language, language education and language policy regimes.

One leading decolonial theorist, Anibal Quijano (2000, 2007) provides a taxonomy of 'coloniality' as consisting of four strands, namely: 'coloniality of power', 'coloniality of knowledge', 'coloniality of being' and 'coloniality of nature'. I add to this list the concept of 'coloniality of language', which I use as an explanatory paradigm for how notions of language and language policy regimes in post-colonial Africa still remain colonial. I argue that mainstream models of language education - multilingual education, mother tongue education, additive bilingual education - that are widely celebrated in post-apartheid South Africa exemplify the subtle manifestation of 'coloniality of language'. All languages of South Africa accorded official or national language status are semiotic social inventions that serve the colonial purpose of invisibilising other language practices. As was the case during the colonial/apartheid era, those languages that are recognised in bi-/multilingual education programmes inadvertently obscure underlying social and educational inequalities.

It is apparent that the same colonially invented versions of languages are being celebrated as bastions of socio-linguistic justice and equity in the domain of language and literacy education. What a classic and colossal example of history repeating itself! It is now well known that during the colonial and apartheid periods, standard 'African languages', also known as vernacular languages, were invented and then deployed toward socio-cultural and political engineering processes that produced skewed versions of local native/indigenous identities (Ranger 1989; Chimhundu 1992; Brutt-Griffler 2006). It is here that the notion of 'coloniality of language' becomes

clearly relevant as it reveals in unequivocal terms that there is really nothing new, novel or progressive about current bi-/multilingual or additive bilingual education policies that rest on colonially invented conceptions of language, culture and identity.

What this analysis aims to show is that models of language education in post-colonial Africa thrive on fallacies and misconceptions about the nature and roles of different varieties of language in society—that is, these beliefs are sustained and justified by false assumptions about what certain languages can and cannot be used for in educational and other applied social policy settings. In their critique of the popularisation of the concept of 'additive bilingualism' in educational contexts, Makoni and Pennycook (2007) note what they see as a disconcerting similarity between monolingualism and additive bilingualism in so far as both are founded on notions of language as an 'object'. It is precisely for this reason that we continue to witness hierarchisation of languages in multilingual societies as much as in monolingual ones (Ndhlovu 2013, 2015b). It is also for this reason that in spite of having a 'multilingual' national language policy framework that prescribes 11 official languages, the entire South African education system continues to be mediated exclusively in English.

The problem with South Africa's multilingual language policy and other similar policies around the world is that they focus on the wrong things while turning a blind eye to those things that, in my view, matter most, namely the diversity of language practices. Conceptually, the standard versions of languages that are currently considered to be the official languages of South Africa (IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, SiSwati, IsiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Chivhenda, Xitsonga, Setswana, English and Afrikaans) are modernist versions of languages that were embraced by both the apartheid and post-apartheid political systems for purposes of building social cohesion, political control, manipulation and cultural normalisation (Ndhlovu 2015a).

Therefore, apart from simply broadening the number of official languages—with names, there are no concrete theoretical and practical contributions that post-colonial/post-apartheid language education policies bring to the African multilingualism debate. This is because such languages continue to be conceived and imagined as countable ontological objects, the only difference being that this is now happening in the post-colonial era under the watchful eyes of equally hegemonic African political elites. The entire project amounts to repetition without difference insofar as it is bereft of original and innovative thinking about 'languages' beyond the colonially inherited ideologies of language. The current constitution of bi-/multilingual education models and their modus operandi in post-colonial African

countries are founded on this premise.

African post-colonial language education policies are pre-eminently reinforcement and carryover from where the colonial language-based social engineering processes left. In other words, while the objective of promoting standardised language forms during the colonial period was “marketed as a program of enhancing administrative convenience, the same process is now being popularized as part of a response to the exigencies of ‘globalisation’, ‘progress’ and ‘modernization’ [whatever these mean] in the context of the post-colonial dispensation. However, the common denominator in both cases is that of control, manipulation”, subtle cultural oppression and, indeed, coloniality of language by stealth (Ndhlovu 2009:144).

This rather uncritical embrace of colonial language ideologies (i.e. that language exists in standard monolithic form) and the almost cultic celebration at the altar of colonial ideologies of language (i.e. that language is there to be used as a tool for cultural normalisation) is an instantiation of what I call ‘coloniality of language’. Three crucial questions invoked by this scenario follow: (1) Are there no philosophies of or about language other than those inherited from the Global North?; (2) If they are indeed absent, why are we not able to develop some?; and (3) Why do scholars, governments and social policy experts from the Global South always choose the easy route of adopting those language ideologies and theoretical frameworks originating from the Global North? I address these and other related questions in subsequent sections of this chapter.

### **3. Language policy-making as coloniality of language**

Regarding the dangers of embracing and imposing some kind of linguistic uniformity on culturally diverse societies, Thompson (1991) cautions that a completely homogeneous language or speech community does not exist in reality: it is an idealisation of a particular set of linguistic practices that have emerged historically and have certain social conditions of existence. This idealisation is the source of what Pierre Bourdieu (1991) calls “the illusion of linguistic communism”. As Thompson (1991) further points out, by taking a particular set of linguistic practices as a normative model of correct usage, an illusion of a common language is produced that ignores the social historical conditions that established a particular set of linguistic practices as dominant and legitimate. “This dominant and legitimate language, this victorious language, is what is commonly taken for granted” (Thompson 1991:5). Therefore, the “idealised language or speech community is an object that has been pre-constructed by a set of social-historical conditions endowing it with the status of the sole legitimate or ‘official’ language of a particular community” (Thompson 1991:5).

Most introductory socio-linguistics textbooks have shied away from looking at language and language policies using these critical lenses that bring to light the pitfalls of idealised standard languages. From the pioneering work of Einar Haugen (1972), Joshua Fishman (1968), Charles Ferguson(1959),Ralph Fasold(1984,1990),Richard Hudson(1996), Ronald Wardaugh (2002) and Bernard Spolsky(1998)to the more recent studies by Florian Coulmas(2013),Janet Holmes(2013) and Enam Al-wer (2011), one can see consistent accounts of canonical models of language policies steeped in a rather uncritical glorification of normative language standards. The dominant theme in most of these socio-linguistic textbooks is one of a step-by-step explanation of typologies of language policies in different regions of the world. What is lacking, though, is a very strong and robust critique of the phenomenology of 'language objects',and how they are products of complex ideological processes that empower and disempower different sections of society in equal measure.

While some of these pioneering and more recent studies are critical of the ways in which national language policies sometimes legitimise the social,economic and political disadvantages faced by ethnolinguistic minorities,they have, unfortunately, done so in ways that inadvertently entrench such inequalities. In particular,mainstream socio-linguistics studies have been heavily influenced by Joshua Fishman's(1972) typological models of language policies, which are said to correspond to particular types of societies.

Fishman identifies three types of language policy. First is the modal approach, which applies to societies that are said to have no overarching linguistic, sociocultural or political past; that is, societies with no“widely accepted and visibly implemented belief and behavior system of indigenously validated greatness”(Fishman 1972: 194). The language policy option for these society types is said to be one in which a language of widest communication is selected as a national or official language. Second is the unimodal approach, which is said to apply in societies that have long-established socio-cultural unities with well-established political boundaries(Garcia and Schiffman 2006:38). In this case,a single indigenous or indigenised language is selected as the national language. The multimodal approach is third.It is said to pertain to societies that have multiple conflicting or competing‘Great Traditions',thus making it imperative for the nations to aspire to a supra-nationalist goal by developing a language policy that accommodates all competing regional/sub-national identities. Under this model, the outcome is a multilingual language policy regime consisting of regional official languages and a language of widest communication.

All three typologies described above clearly indicate that language

policies are products of a “set of deliberate activities systematically designed to organize and develop the language resources of the community” (Fishman 1973:24)-otherwise known as language planning. An important point missed by such approaches is that they take for granted the object (language) that is subjected to such planning and policy activities. While Fishman's model is part of the established global orthodoxy in language policies, it betrays the pitfalls of standard language ideological thinking, which has become the subject of recent scholarly criticism. Fishman's typological model seems to gloss over the theoretical and empirical questions on the distinction between ‘language as an object’ and ‘language as capacity’, or way of communication. The work of scholars -such as Roy Harris(1987,1998,1999, 2006,George Wolf and Nigel Love (1992),and Michael Toolan(1999)- who all argue for an integrationist theory of language and (socio)linguistics, has long demonstrated the unhelpfulness of looking at ‘language’ as an ontological object -or something that can be subjected to processes of planning and policy-making in unproblematic ways.

Current approaches to language policy-making in post-colonial African countries can be explained in terms of their hegemonic intentions as follows. First, language policies sometimes wrongly consign languages and their associated cultural identities into bifurcated categories of ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’, ‘useful’ and ‘less useful’, and ‘important’ and ‘unimportant’. This breeds all sorts of injustices, inequities and exclusions, as the fortunes of ethnolinguistic groups and individuals within them become indexically tied to those of the languages they speak (Ndhlovu 2015a). In multi-ethnic and multilingual African contexts, language policies can determine who has access to schools, who has opportunities for economic advancement, who participates in political decisions, who has access to governmental services and who gets treated fairly by governmental agencies (Brown and Ganguly 2003). Language policies can determine who gets ahead and who gets left behind. Language policies do, indeed, affect the prospects for ethnic success - for both ethnic groups and the individuals in these groups. Politics, economics, community development, advocacy activities and active participation in all other aspects of life will always remain elusive for the majority as long as they are conducted in languages other than those spoken and easily understood by all sections of society, both local and trans-local. The prevailing conditions in most African countries are such that active citizenship participation and national political deliberations are mediated mainly in standard national and official languages, such as isiZulu, isiXhosa, Setswana, Tshivenda, Sesotho, isiNdebele, ChiShona, Chinyanja, Portuguese, English and Afrikaans (among others). This is exclusionary. For example, participatory democracy requires that the deliberations of legislators be conducted and communicated in languages understood by and

accessible to all citizens, including those labelled as minority ethnolinguistic groups.

The second problem about language policies is that they have traditionally proceeded along the route of what has come to be known as the 'standard language ideology'. Language ideologies are beliefs that we hold about what constitutes language. Our responses to the question of 'What is language?' explicitly or implicitly betray our language ideologies. On the other hand, the related concept of ideologies about language refers to beliefs that we hold about what language is for, or why we need language (Milroy 2001; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). Our responses to the question of 'What are languages used for?' betray our ideologies about language. Both language ideologies and ideologies about language are cultural representations - whether explicit or implicit - of the intersection of language and human beings in a social world. They link language to identity, power, aesthetics, morality and epistemology - and, indeed, to just about everything else we do in life. Ideologies and beliefs about language are also deeply rooted in personal biographies, and in political and educational contexts (Shohamy 2009). Through such linkages, language ideologies and ideologies about language underpin not only linguistic form and use, but also significant social institutions and fundamental notions of person and community (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). Language ideologies and ideologies about language proceed from, and are shaped by, what Walter Mignolo (2000) calls "locus of enunciation"; that is, our point of departure in looking at the world and everything in it, including how we conceptualise things called 'languages'.

The locus of enunciation of the 'standard language ideology' derives from what Makoni and Pennycook (2007:143) call the "census ideology". Founded on the dual notion of both 'languages' and speakers of those languages being amenable to counting, the census ideology masks the differences in the ways the objects called 'languages' have been conceptualised. Makoni and Pennycook (2007:143) note that "it has been widely attested that there is massive disparity between the number of languages that linguists believe exist [the etic or outsider's view] and the number of languages that people report themselves as speaking [the emic or insider's view]".

The origins of both the standard language ideology and the census ideology of language can be traced back to the emergence of Western modernity. This is tied to the fatalistic claims about universalism and global standards of just about everything that constitutes the modern world system. Standard language ideologies can, therefore be said to be part of a global system of hegemony and hierarchies of humanity, whereby the meanings and ideas about languages and what they are meant to do are shaped by



dominant modernist worldviews that tend toward universality and uniformity. In his critique of modernist Euro-American epistemological paradigms and their apparent totalising approaches to the interpretation of social reality, Anibal Quijano(2007:168)cautions:

It is essential that we continue to investigate and debate the implications of the epistemological paradigm of the relation between the whole and its parts as this relates to socio-historical existence. Eurocentrism has led virtually the whole world to accept the idea that within a totality, the whole has absolute determinant primacy over all of the parts, and that therefore there is one and only one logic that governs behaviour of the whole and all of the parts. The possible variants in the movement of the parts are secondary, as they do not affect the whole and are recognized as particularities within the general rule or logic of the whole to which they belong.

This quotation captures clearly the homogenising ideology behind standard language forms, often erroneously considered to be constituted by mutually intelligible dialects. Within current imaginings and understandings of post-colonial African cultural identities, all other language forms are and continue to be considered as constituent parts of standard languages. This is a problematic view that stems from modernist ideological thinking about languages. It misses the crucial point that there is no universal concept of language - every cultural group has its own understanding of what constitutes a language. Therefore, the major problem with dominant and universalising theories of language policy, and language and identity, is in their desire to speak for everyone else; yet, beneath such pretensions is the tendency to want to gate-keep and monopolise the domain of knowledge production, theory formation and conceptualising the universe. It is this fallacy that this article questions and challenges in relation to language policies, languages, and their associated political and cultural identities in post-colonial Africa.

Following the rise of standard language ideological frameworks from the Global North, meta-discursive regimes have been constructed to describe languages with significant implications for both 'language'(as a general capacity) and 'languages'(as entities). This means that although it is acknowledged that all humans have language, the way in which both senses of language are understood is constructed through a particular ideological lens that excludes other ways of thinking. These are non linguistic imperatives that form the basis of language scientists' analyses and evaluations of languages.

In this vein, Makoni and Pennycook (2007) have sought to debunk, in particular, the standard language ideology that underpins dominant

understandings of languages, language policies and the discourses that sustain them by pointing out that linguistics does not need to postulate the existence of (standard) languages as part of its theoretical apparatus. They suggest that “linguistics needs to become the study of how people communicate rather than the scientific study of language ... It becomes human linguistics rather than a linguistics of language”(Makoni and Pennycook 2007:19). Their overall argument is that the dominant ways of talking about languages (meta-discursive regimes) are part of a process of epistemic (or epistemological) violence that was visited on the speakers of different language forms that were suppressed through modernist and colonial invention and imposition of standard languages.

‘Epistemic violence’ is a crucial concept that aligns with the notion of coloniality of language introduced in this paper. It captures the ways in which the standard language ideology has been applied to the systematic obliteration of other conceptualisations of languages and their associated cultural identities through processes of language policy and planning. As I have argued, the notion of language is more complex and broader than is currently suggested by standard language ideological frameworks. Definitions of language should encompass any or all of the following: dialect continua, cultural practices and identities, discursive practices, traditions, customs, social relationships, connections to the land and nature, religion, spirituality, worldviews and philosophies, proverbial lore, and so on (Ndhlovu 2013, 2015a). In other words, the concept of language does not have to refer to a noun only; it can be an action word or even a describing word - and all these imperatives should be taken into account when formulating language education policies.

But mainstream language policies seeking to promote additive bilingualism, for example, are founded upon a very specific view of language; a view that takes languages to be ‘entities’ which, when accessed, will then be beneficial to the speakers. In this regard, additive bilingualism and multilingualism must also be understood as particular ways of thinking about language.

In an edited volume, aptly titled *Dangerous Multilingualism*, Blommaert, Leppanen, Pahta, Virkkula and Rasanen (2012) discuss key themes expressed by the most recent and burgeoning body of socio-linguistics scholarship critical of the ‘endangering’ nature of mainstream conceptualisations of bilingualism and multilingualism. Pitting the modernist notions of ‘order’ against ‘disorder’, ‘purity’ against ‘impurity’, and ‘normality’ against ‘abnormality’, Blommaert et al. (2012:18) argue that the older tradition of socio-linguistic theorisation saw “problems with multilingualism .... as problems of (dis)order, and the solutions that emerged

out of such analyses rarely brought real benefit to the multilingual subjects to whom they were addressed. The reason for this failure was that sociolinguists of that era tended to overlook the complexity of the phenomenology of multilingualism-on-the-ground". Blommaert et al. advise that we need to start with our "feet on the ground from a strong awareness that the phenomenology of language in society has changed, has become more complex and less predictable than we thought it was. We have the advantage over earlier generations of being able to draw on a far more sophisticated battery of sociolinguistic insights and understandings"(2012: 18).

Taking a cue from these insights, I argue that, in its current iteration, the notion of multilingualism and how it is incorporated in language policy frameworks is, indeed, a very dangerous one because it hides more than it reveals. Some of the things that are hidden by seemingly progressive multilingualism discourses include: (i) that the process of enumerating multiple monolithic 'language' objects is underpinned by principles of the standard ideology; and (ii) that like other similar (post)modernist notions - emancipation, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, universalism and globalisation - the mainstream conception of multilingualism is part of the global imperial designs constituting ideological leanings of elite researchers and those in power bent on keeping certain groups out of their areas of interaction (Makoni 2012). In what I think is the most candid critique of the misleading and disingenuous nature of ideologies that inform mainstream understandings of multilingualism, Makoni (2012: 192-193) argues that:

[Multilingualism] contains a powerful sense of social romanticism, creating an illusion of equality in a highly asymmetrical world, particularly in contexts characterized by a search for homogenization ....

A close look at the epistemological architecture of multilingualism in applied settings (such as multilingual education and multilingual national language policies) reveals that this concept reinforces social class hegemony and privilege by masking endemic inequalities, narrow forms of ethnonationalism, and xenophobia.

#### **4. Conclusion: Way forward**

The primary goals of any meaningful form of education include those of meeting the learning needs and aspirations of individuals; addressing the development needs of society; contributing to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge; and contributing towards the development of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens (Department of Education 1997). Therefore, in our attempts to mitigate the pervasive effects

of the monolingual mindset(Clyne 2005;Gogolin 1994,2002)that is prevalent in language classrooms, we need to first of all get the policy settings right. That is, we need to adopt language education policies that are sensitive to the diversity of cultures and language profiles that students bring into the classroom. International research reports on language education policy are replete with case studies on how learners can easily accomplish academic tasks collaboratively when encouraged to draw from multiple linguistic and literacy practices. See,for example, the work of Baker(1996)and Creese and Blackledge (2008)for eloquent theorisation and documentation of hybrid multilingual education practices as well as their benefits. With specific reference to the Australian context, Michael Clyne(2008:361)has suggested that:

A way of beating the monolingual mindset might be to have in decision making roles people who were brought up bilingually or who have acquired a high level of bilingualism through the education system,sometimes complemented by travel and/or exposure to other languages in Australia.

In making this recommendation Clyne also cautions that the possibility of beating the 'monolingual mindset' will almost remain a far cry because any such efforts are“largely undermined by the present generation of decision makers obsessed with a monolingual mindset”(2008:361). This is, indeed, a legitimate concern. However,I would add that what is even more worrisome is the obsession with a narrow and monolingual view of language that we find among both the decision makers and the academic community. As I have indicated above, the real substance of the matter is not necessarily about embracing multiple pre-given‘language’objects. Rather, I see the solution to the challenges besetting language education as being located at the sites of policy makers'and academic experts' epistemological and conceptual imaginings of language.

While the desire to have more bilingual or multilingual decision makers is an enviable aspirational goal, the question still remains: What is it that these people will be accommodating in their mindsets? If they only have exposure to multiple named and enumerable things called‘languages’,then there is a very slim chance that their decisions will make any difference at all. What these decision makers need to have is openness and capacity to embrace and formulate language policies that recognise the diversity of language practices, including those communicative practices of Southern communities that fall outside the narrow orbit of standard language ideological frameworks. A foundational principle of Southern perspective on language education is one about its discourse systems that are“inherently transdisciplinary,multilingual and multicultural. The choice and use of methods are wide-ranging and eclectic...”(Shi-xu 2014:362);grounded in

local cultural contexts yet still open to global disciplinary dialogue as a way “to achieve or maintain harmonious relationship with others through attending to others' interests, incorporating differences, avoiding conflicts, balancing powers, etc”(Shi-xu 2014:364). These are all useful insights of Southern epistemologies that are in short supply in the hegemonic Northern discourses that currently mediate language education policies.

The African philosophy of Ubuntu (meaning 'I am because you are') (Mbigi and Maree 1997) is one example of a Southern perspective that can help both to broaden the understandings of what counts as language and education, and to simultaneously push back the frontiers of coloniality that are currently embedded in mainstream language education policies. Ubuntu is holistic in its inspirations and emphasises the need to harness the social experiences and worldviews of African people and align them with successful conceptual frameworks from other parts of the world (Ndhlovu 2019). In other words, Ubuntu does not believe in itself as the only way. Instead, it is an approach that is motivated by the desire to establish rapprochement among the multiple ways in which different societies and civilisations read and interpret the world-including the multiple language practices that ought to have a place in educational policy frameworks.

A significant part of Southern perspectives on language and social policy-making is one about recognising and embracing culturally relevant modes of engaging communities that we serve as educators. Southern perspectives are devoted to finding connections, points of confluence, and opportunities for transfer of methods, pedagogies and concepts, not only among members of academic communities, but also between them and the non-communities they serve. A major goal is to develop alternative ways for meeting the practical educational needs of individuals and communities - in ways that mitigate the limitations of conventional approaches such as the interventionist top-down Northern paradigms that tend to overlook the centrality of local community actors. This is about forging collaborative teaching and research agendas with non-academic communities as equal partners, whereby education practitioners and policy makers are willing to learn at the feet of community leaders, women, the youth, refugees, migrants-the subaltern so to speak-by listening to their stories, and using such stories to generate concept notes that will inform language education policies. Such an approach is in line with the 'decolonial turn', a trend pursued mainly (but not exclusively) by Latin American, African and other like-minded social scientists from both the Global South and the Global North.

The coloniality of language thesis advanced in this chapter stresses the interdisciplinary and unifying potential of decolonial epistemology, and in

particular its applied interests in relation to the cultural mediators of language education policy. It calls for pluralisation of knowledge production processes in globally inclusive ways that require us to seriously consider contextual particularities and the multi-dimensional character of educational practices in different societal contexts. This is about integrating praxis, theory, action and reflection in ways that provoke revolutionary thinking about the roles of knowledge and knowledge production in social transformation (Chilisa 2011; Smith 2012).

Deploying the analytical framework of 'coloniality of language' holds the promise for overcoming challenges besetting language education policies in post-colonial African contexts. The insights of coloniality of language draw our attention to what Benson (2014) calls a multilingual habitus, which is the direct opposite of a monolingual habitus. A multilingual habitus makes "the language(s) of teaching and learning explicit" (Benson 2014:293) through the development of appropriate methods, materials and assessments that reflect the social and cultural realities of learners and the communities to which they belong.

Benson (2014) explicates the characteristic features and benefits of a multilingual habitus as follows. First, it allows for the negotiation of language(s) of literacy and interaction among classroom participants. Second, it allows for the design of learning goals and their assessments in terms of the quality and usefulness of competences that learners bring to the classroom context, or what others have called 'funds of knowledge' (McIntyre, Rosebery and Gonzalez 2001). Third, it provides opportunities for building on children's knowledges and experiences. Fourth, it exposes learners to dominant forms of language at developmentally appropriate levels. Fifth, it promotes the development of metalinguistic awareness among both teachers and learners as an integral part of language learning. And lastly, while a multilingual habitus values the use of dominant language materials as necessary, it also strongly encourages scaffolding meaning and using methods and other language types appropriate to the learners' needs and experiences. These approaches of the multilingual habitus rely on and promote the use of both fixed and fluid linguistic resources in language education.

When put together, the two notions of coloniality of language and multilingual habitus help us see students' 'funds of knowledge'. This is about harnessing the totality of linguistic resources, communication codes and cultures of learning, and deploying them towards language teaching in multilingual classrooms. Therefore, if we are to successfully circumvent standard language ideologies that underpin current language education policies, we need to revisit those colonial imperatives of language that have

usurped and monopolised the domain of language education with the view to opening up spaces for the recognition of alternative, especially Southern, conceptualisations. This is the most important step that we need to take before we can try to address methodological questions around language teaching, language and social justice, and language and citizenship participation, and so on.

To summarise, this chapter has extended further the promises held by alternative conceptualisations of languages to push the boundaries of the field of educational linguistics. The argument is that language policy and planning research needs to focus not only on the political contexts in which it operates, but also on the nature of the concepts of language that underpin the different options - to question not only the *realpolitik*, but also the *reallinguistik* of the 20th century, which appears to be still ensconced in 21st-century academic debates and conversations around this topic. Therefore, when language education policy is seen through the lens of coloniality of language, it should apply a transactive approach to language use whereby language is viewed as an ongoing process of social transaction rather than an institution. As Khubchandani (1997:37) posits, this will enable us to recognise the “synergic network of plurilingual language use as a means to inspire trust in cross-cultural settings”. In looking at language from this angle, the intention is to highlight the various ways by which students can find richness and strength out of their linguistic capabilities, which will ultimately see them reach their full potential and achieve educational outcomes beneficial to themselves and their communities.